

**DRYDEN
POLICY DIRECTIVE**

Directive: DPD 3792.1

Effective Date: January 1, 1998
Expiration Date: January 1, 2003

Responsible Office: XE/Employee Assistance Office

Subject: Employee Assistance Program

1. POLICY

Public Laws and implementing regulations require each agency to ensure that management provides for confidential assistance for troubled employees. Accordingly, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is established to provide, to the extent feasible, programs and services to employees and their dependents who have problems in the area of mental health, chemical dependency, personal or social adjustment which negatively impact job performance.

The responsibility for this program is assigned to the Dryden EAP Manager/Administrator, under the supervision of the Center Director for the following reasons: Program acceptance and utilization requires positioning at the highest levels of the organization, reflecting support and participation by senior management; confidentiality considerations on EAP matters involving safety and security of Dryden employees and the workplace environment require EAP direct access to the Center Director; reduction/elimination of crisis-level job stress of a systemic and management controllable nature may require the Center Director's immediate and unimpeded attention.

2. SCOPE OF PROGRAM

This program is designed to assist employees whose work performance shows decrements from previously acceptable levels. It is a rehabilitative, not punitive program. This program is not designed for job performance problems due to lack of skills or improper job placement. These will continue to be handled through usual human resources procedures.

a. Eligibility: Permanent full-time or part-time NASA or other federal government employees, co-ops, student aids and their dependents.

b. Self-referral or Informal Referral: Anyone who is concerned about a problem may directly access the program. All such contacts will be strictly confidential. When a supervisor makes an informal referral due to poor job performance and there is no improvement within an acceptable amount of time, normally 90 days, other options should be discussed with the EAP Manager.

c. Formal Supervisory Referral: For manager/supervisor referrals, see Item 4. c (6)

d. Confidentiality: The EAP records of all employees served are a part of the NASA Privacy Act System of Records (NASA 10HIMS)

(1) In each case the concerned employee must sign appropriate consent forms stating release of information to a specific individual before the release of any information is given. Each person or agency to receive such information must be specifically designated and the exact nature of any information to be disclosed must be explicitly stated.

(2) Records pertaining to an employee's participation in the EAP do not become part of the employee's official personnel file or medical record. However, any disciplinary, adverse or other administrative action resulting from poor performance are documented in the personnel record.

(3) Disclosure of illegal activities of persons with other than drug or alcohol problems will be in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 which prohibits disclosure of 10HIMS medical record information outside of NASA except in pretrial discovery and court procedures. Special Office of Personnel Management disclosure procedures apply to persons with drug and alcohol problems when inquiry applies to specific areas of legal procedures detailed in NMI 3792.3.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

The program activities below may be accomplished by on-site EAP/medical personnel, by consultants, or by outside therapists or other community resources.

A. Program Activities:

(1) Identify and assess level of primary concern, i.e., alcohol/drug dependency, mental health issue; utilize services of on-site medical staff when appropriate.

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- (2) Develop treatment plan for employee. Provide short-term counseling, when appropriate.
- (3) Refer to appropriate community resource/treatment provider.
- (4) Monitor cooperation of employee during formal treatment process through close connection with provider. When employee is a management/supervisor referral, apprise supervisor of level of cooperation.
- (5) Follow up with employee during early recovery, providing access to additional services when indicated, including successful reintegration into the workforce.

B. Education/Training - Training for supervisors, managers and employees will include:

- (1) The impact of mental well-being on job performance.
- (2) Use of EAP.
- (3) Identification/intervention of employees in need of assistance.
- (4) Methods for referral.
- (5) Management of employees with problems.
- (6) Positive return-to-work experience.
- (7) Confidentiality.
- (8) Relationship of EAP to personnel actions.
- (9) Responding to critical incidents, actual or potential, at DFRC as member of the Crisis Management Team.
- (10) Implementing EAP requirements of NASA Drug-Free Workplace Program (NMI 3792.3)

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Director, Dryden Flight Research Center is responsible for:

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- (1) Direct supervision of EAP Manager/Administrator, a Director's staff position.
- (2) Issuing local policy statements supporting the EAP at Dryden Flight Research Center.
- (3) Designating, in writing, the EAP Program Administrator/Manager, and other EAP personnel who will be responsible for the preparation of Center instructions and procedures, and for reporting results at the local level. The legal responsibility for maintaining confidentiality and attendant penalties for its violation shall be clearly stated in the designation letter.

B. Program Manager/Administrator will be responsible for:

- (1) Serving as on-site EAP counselor.
- (2) Insuring strong management backing for the EAP.
- (3) Establishing specific understanding of the direction and intended goals of the EAP with off-site service providers.
- (4) Serving as monitor of the effectiveness of the Center's overall program through annual program review or formal employee survey.
- (5) Insuring that programs to inform and educate Center personnel are developed and carried out in a timely and consistent basis.
- (6) Preparing statistical and administrative reports of the activities of the program for submission to appropriate NASA authorities and other government agencies, as required.
- (7) Providing information and guidance to supervisors, manager and employees regarding the Employee Assistance Program.
- (8) Insuring that supervisors receive education and training in all aspects of the EAP in a timely and continuous manner, as outlined in 3b.
- (9) Serving as team lead for EAP staff.
- (10) Assessing and insuring appropriateness of referral resources.

C. Supervisors are responsible for:

- (1) Carefully reviewing the work performance of their employees.
- (2) Requiring quality work performance and, when there is a deficiency, discussing the matter with the employee and requiring prompt and sustained improvement.
- (3) Urging employees whose deteriorating work performance has not been improved through normal administrative procedures and which may possibly be due to psychological or chemical abuse problem, to contact the EAP Manager, off-site EAP provider, or the Dryden medical health unit.
- (4) Avoiding medical diagnosis during discussion with an employee. A supervisor/manager may suspect that chemical abuse or a psychological problem could be the cause of poor work performance, but must never try to diagnose.
- (5) Documenting any work performance problems.
- (6) Referring the employee to the EAP when the employee's work performance is below acceptable work levels as prescribed in the yearly performance appraisal or before performance is seriously impaired. The supervisor shall approach the employee about improving job performance with a specific recommendation of referral to EAP. The supervisor shall make clear that if an employee fails to restore performance within an appropriate amount of time, administrative action will be initiated.

Formal Referral - Supervisor should formally refer an employee directly to the EAP, as part of written notification to the employee of work performance persisting at an unacceptable level. A formal referral provides for a possible three-way communication between the counselor, employee and supervisor. This does not become part of the employee's personnel folder unless adverse or administrative action must be taken. The EAP Manager and the Human Resources Management and Development Office should work in coordination with the supervisor on this notification.

- (7) Initiating, in consultation with the EAP Program Manager and the Human Resources Management and Development Office, appropriate administrative action (including disciplinary or adverse action), when an employee fails to bring performance up to a satisfactory level after being offered assistance under this Program, and allowed a reasonable period of time for rehabilitation.

Kenneth J. Szalai
Director